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ABSTRACT

A systematic review of the standards of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) was undertaken to determine the extent to which gender issues are addressed and whether the current standards are sufficient for the preparation of counselors in gender issues. The review revealed that references to gender in the CACREP standards are not extensive. Gender was mentioned directly in two of the six basic standards, indirectly in two, and it was not mentioned in two; gender was mentioned directly in two of the six specialty standards and indirectly in the remaining four. Modifying the CACREP standards to assure more systematic attention to gender issues in all aspects of the training program may be an effective strategy for accomplishing the goal of enhanced gender awareness and training among faculty, administrators, and counselor trainees. It is noted, however, that counselor education program requirements already demand full course loads of critical classes. The addition of any new required classes, such as those dealing with gender issues, may be impossible given the available resources to counselor education programs. Implications for further research include investigating the factors that contribute to effective gender-sensitive counselor education and exploring differing perceptions of such factors. (Contains 15 references.) (LSR)

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RUNNING HEAD: GENDER ISSUES IN COUNSELOR EDUCATION

Gender Issues in Counselor Education:

Are the CACREP Standards Sufficient?

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Abstract

The authors completed a systematic review of the CACREP Standards to determine the extent to which gender issues are addressed. Areas in the standards where additional references to gender may be included are considered. The article concludes with a discussion of whether the current CACREP Standards, take as a whole, are sufficient for the preparation of counselors in gender issues.

Gender has been conceptualized as a broad organizing principle of society and social interactions which is helpful in understanding the experiences of both men and women (Cook, 1990; Lott, 1990). Models for including gender issues in the training of counselors have been proposed (Harway, 1979; Worell, 1980; Worell & Remer, 1992), and methods for gender-fair counseling have been developed (Foxley, 1979; Good, Gilbert, & Scher, 1990; Van Buren, 1992). Subsequently, Dupuy, Ritchie, and Cook (1994) studied the extent to which gender issues actually are being addressed in counselor preparation and determined that a positive relationship exists between CACREP accreditation and inclusion of gender issues. These authors reported that, while the majority of programs surveyed considered gender issues to be important, less than half of the programs included gender issues in the curriculum and less than one-third offered a separate course. They concluded that "...there may be awareness of the need for more emphasis on women's and gender issues...[however] awareness of the inadequacy does not necessarily lead to curricular change" (p. 244).

A review of the CACREP standards (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 1994) reveals that curricula comprise only a small, though certainly central, part of the standards. It has been suggested that a variety of factors in addition to curricula are important in preparing counselors to address gender issues effectively (Gilbert, 1992; Worell & Remer, 1992). These factors include faculty composition, faculty education, research activities, internships, student composition, and courses available elsewhere in the university, to name a few. The extent to which these factors are influential in counselor training have not been studied. As a step toward addressing these concerns, the authors completed a systematic review of the CACREP standards to determine the extent to which

gender issues are addressed in all areas of the standards, including the six basic standards and standards for specialty training. The results of this review are discussed below, followed by consideration of areas in the standards where additional references to gender may be included. The article concludes with a discussion of whether the current CACREP standards, taken as whole, are sufficient for the preparation of counselors in gender issues.

Gender References in the CACREP Standards

Prior to engaging in a systematic review of the standards, the authors found it necessary to define "gender references." The glossary to the CACREP standards does not define "gender" nor does it define "diversity." However, a definition of "multicultural counseling" is included. This definition states that "multicultural [is defined as] representing a diversity including different races, economic backgrounds, ages, ethnic backgrounds, genders, sexual orientations, and physical and mental abilities" (p. 108). Because gender is included in this definition, and because "diversity," which includes gender, is included in many places in the standards, we chose to identify references to diversity as well as gender in our review. When the word "gender" was included, or, less commonly, "women" or "men," this was considered to be a direct reference to gender issues, while inclusion of the word "diversity" was considered to be an indirect reference. Gender was mentioned directly in two of the six basic standards, indirectly in two, and it was not mentioned in two. Gender was mentioned directly in two of the six specialty standards and indirectly in the remaining four. These references to gender in the standards are cited below.

Standard I - The Institution

Standard I includes consideration of the institution in which the counselor education

program is housed, and the support which that institution provides to the counseling training program. Reference is made to institutional catalogs and cooperative relationships between other academic units which contribute to the professional preparation of students. Although women's studies programs are one such academic unit, there is no specific reference to these programs nor to gender or diversity issues in this section of the standards.

Standard II - Program Objectives and Curriculum

Standard II includes consideration of both program objectives and curriculum of the counseling training program. Although the standards pertaining to program objectives indicate that consideration needs to be given to counseling and development in a pluralistic society, the definition of "pluralistic" in the glossary includes only "ethnic, racial, religious and social groups" (p. 109), and not gender. References to gender are not included prior to Standard IIJ, Curricular Experiences.

Five specific references to gender can be found in Section II (Program Objectives and Curriculum), Standard J. This standard states that "curricular experiences and demonstrated knowledge in each of the eight common-core areas are required of all students in the academic unit" (p. 51). References to gender appear in four of the eight common-core areas: Social and Cultural Foundations (#2), Helping Relationships (#3), Career and Lifestyle Development (#5), and Appraisal (#6). The standards which reference gender are as follows:

"Standard 2b. attitudes and behavior based on such factors as age, race, religious preference, physical disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity and culture, family patterns, gender, socioeconomic status, and intellectual ability;...

Standard 3c. counselor or consultant characteristics and behaviors that influence helping

processes, including age, gender and ethnic differences, verbal and nonverbal behaviors and personal characteristics, orientations, and skills;...

Standard 3d. client or consultee characteristics and behaviors that influence helping processes including age, gender and ethnic differences, verbal and nonverbal behaviors and personal characteristics, traits, capabilities, and life circumstances;...

Standard 5d. interrelationships among work, family, and other life roles and factors including multicultural and gender issues as related to career development;...

Standard 6f. age, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, and culture factors related to the assessment and evaluation of individuals and groups" (pp. 51-53).

Gender is not addressed in the remaining four core areas of the curriculum: Human Growth and Development (#1), Group Work (#4), Research and Program Evaluation (#7), and Professional Orientation (#8).

Standard III - Clinical Instruction

The standards in section three refer to clinical instruction in counselor preparation, including on-campus practica, off-campus practica, internships, and supervision. There is one indirect reference to gender in this set of standards. Standard III-L requires that "...clinical experiences provide opportunities for students to counsel clients representative of the ethnic, lifestyle, and demographic diversity in their community" (p. 57). Indirectly, this standard can be presented to represent a need for attention to gender issues in practical experiences.

Standard IV - Faculty and Staff

This section of the standards addresses the composition and qualifications of faculty and staff. One reference to gender appears in this section:

"Standard I. There is effort to recruit and retain program faculty members representative of the diversity among people in society (e.g., women, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities)" (p. 59).

Standard V - Organization and Administration

This section of the standards addresses a broad array of operational issues in counselor training programs, including faculty-student ratios, graduate assistant support, support for research, admissions, endorsement policies, and advisement, to name a few. One reference to gender appears in Section V:

"Standard J. A policy to recruit students representing a multicultural and diverse society has been developed and is implemented by program faculty" (p. 61).

Standard VI - Evaluations in the Program

This section of the standards addresses systematic program evaluation which includes input from students, faculty, graduates, and employers. There are no references to gender issues in this section of the standards.

Doctoral Standards

The standards for doctoral programs in counselor education and supervision encompass all of the entry-level standards referred to above. Only one reference to gender occurs in the doctoral standards, under program objectives and curriculum. The wording, similar to that of earlier standards, refers to curricular experiences in "sociocultural, demographic, and lifestyle diversity" (p. 65).

Specialty Standards

Curricular Experiences for Community Counseling Programs. One reference to gender

appears under the heading of *Knowledge and Skills for the Practice of Community Counseling*:

"Standard C1. client characteristics of individuals served by institutions and agencies offering community counseling services, including, but not limited to the effects of socioeconomic status, unemployment, aging, gender, culture, race, ethnicity, chronic illness, developmental transitions, and interpersonal, family, and community violence" (p. 69).

Curricular Experiences for Specializations in Gerontological Counseling within Community Counseling Programs. Gender is referenced under *Special Population Situations and Issues*:

"Standard C3a. older women, older men, single living, and sexuality" (p. 71).

Curricular Experiences for Marriage and Family Counseling/Therapy Programs. Gender is indirectly referenced under the heading *Foundations of Marriage and Family Counseling/Therapy*:

"Standard A6. implications of sociocultural, demographic, and lifestyle diversty relevant to marriage and family counseling/therapy (p. 73).

Curricular Experiences for Mental Health Counseling Programs. Gender is indirectly referenced under the heading *Foundations of Mental Health Counseling*:

"Standard A5. implications of sociocultural, demographic, and lifestyle diversity relevant to mental health counseling" (p. 75).

Curricular Experiences for School Counseling Programs. Gender is indirectly referenced under the heading *Foundations of School Counseling*:

"Standard A6. implications of sociocultural, demographic, and lifestyle diversity relevant

to school counseling" (p. 77).

Curricular Experiences for Student Affairs Practice in Higher Education. Gender is indirectly referenced under the heading *Foundations of Student Affairs Practice in Higher Education*:

"Standard A7. implications of sociocultural, demographic, and lifestyle diversity relevant to student affairs practice in higher education" (p. 79).

Increasing Gender References in the CACREP Standards

The references to gender in the CACREP standards are not extensive. The question posed in the title of this article is whether they are sufficient to encourage training of counselors in gender issues. Our review suggests that references to gender, when they occur, are often part of lists requiring that counselors attend to all possible issues of diversity and multiculturalism, broadly conceived. The wording of these standards refers to "issues such as gender," allowing latitude for programs to pick and choose among alternative issues for inclusion in their curricula. Stronger language would refer to "issues including gender" to assure that gender issues do not "get lost" and become the focus of little or no attention in a training program. This language is used in some of the standards where gender is mentioned, but not consistently. Although Dupuy, Ritchie, and Cook (1994) found a positive relationship between gender and the CACREP standards, this example suggests that the relationship could conceivably be even more positive if references to gender were strengthened. Some additional examples of where gender references in the standards could be strengthened follow.

Standards I - The Institution

In reviewing Standard I, we identified no specific areas where we would recommend the

inclusion of language specific to gender. However, consistent with the recommendations of Gilbert (1992), a departmental commitment to gender issues would assure that consideration be given to these issues in the development of the program and the relationship of the program to other aspects of the institution.

Standards II - Program Objectives and Curriculum

Gender issues could be added to at least two of the four core curricular areas where such references do not now occur. Certainly the influence of gender could be easily included in the core area of human growth and development, whereas it now seems to be only implied in a requirement for study of "individual and family development." The group work standard could include consideration of characteristics of client populations which may affect group process or group focus or goals, including gender. Research and program evaluation could specify attention to outcome studies with specific populations, including attention to relevant variables including gender, though such an addition to the standards could be perceived as overly prescriptive. Research considerations may be more appropriately addressed through the ACA Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice (ACA, 1995) than through the CACREP standards. Similarly, issues such as historical roles for men and women in the profession (professional orientation issues) may be overly prescriptive areas for inclusion in the standards, though they could be of interest to students studying counseling.

Standard IIC could be revised to incorporate a definition of "personal growth" which includes reference to gender issues. For example, the standard could state that students are encouraged to engage in activities that contribute to their personal growth, including awareness of the influence of culture and gender on their development and functioning.

Standard III - Clinical Instruction

Section III of the CACREP Standards is an area where gender could be addressed specifically. A minor rewording of Standard III-L to "Clinical experiences (practicum and internship) provide opportunities for students to counsel clients representative of the ethnic, lifestyle, and demographic (i.e., age, gender, ethnicity) diversity of their community and society" (p. 57) would serve to bring attention to gender concerns. Consideration could be given to addressing gender issues more thoroughly in Section III, given that practicum and internship experiences provide the arena in which counselors-in-training "work out" issues that are not always in the forefront of their didactic learning. Slimp and Burian (1994) suggested that counselor education programs, in conjunction with internship sites, should be particularly concerned with applied training in ethics, including sexual ethics, as this is where the beginning practitioner negotiates both counselor-colleague and counselor-client boundaries. A standard which addressed this concern could be added to the existing clinical standards.

It might be appropriate to promote additional awareness of gender issues by including the word "gender" in all standards currently addressing "sociocultural, demographic, and lifestyle diversity." Vasquez (1988) defined a successful counselor training program as one that would "provide a safe environment in which the value of honest and forthright discussions of sexuality and sexual attraction, sexual socialization issues, and other relevant topics may be explored" (p. 240). There is a salient yet virtually unmet need for increased emphasis of this topic in counselor education programs (Hoffman, 1995).

Standard IV - Faculty and Staff

This section of the standards seems to address gender issues adequately, in providing for

recruitment of a diverse faculty.

Standard V - Organization and Administration

The indirect reference to gender in this standard could be made more specific. For example, Standard V-J could be revised to state that "A policy to recruit students representing a multicultural and diverse society (e.g., women, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities) has been developed and implemented by program faculty." Standard V-D-2, which refers to the student handbook, could be revised to include an additional subcategory that addresses the program's policies regarding sexual harassment, dual relationships, and similar issues.

Standard VI - Evaluations in the Program

Standard VI-C-2 could be expanded to allow students an opportunity to comment on qualitative aspects of the program. Anonymous responses would allow students an opportunity to address gender issues in their counselor training.

Doctoral and Specialty Standards

Doctoral Level Standards. Reference to gender in the doctoral standards easily could be made through a revision of Standard II-C-7 by replacing "lifestyle diversity" with "demographic and lifestyle diversity (e.g., age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity)."

Curricular Experiences for Specialties. The types of references to gender suggested above could be included in the specialty standards as well. Current indirect references could be changed to direct references. Wording such as "diversity" could be modified to include a parenthetical reference specifying what is meant by this term, and that gender is a major concept to be included. Contextual dimensions of each of the specialty standards could incorporate a new standard which draws attention to diversity issues, including gender.

Discussion

Including additional references to gender in the CACREP standards has the potential to bring attention to gender issues in counselor training, but would not dictate how such training would be conducted. Programs may offer specific courses that deal with gender issues alone in addition to incorporating or infusing gender issues into existing courses. Courses that focus on women's and/or men's experiences in a societal context can be quite valuable, but inevitably have limited benefits unless they are required of all students. Counselor education program requirements already demand full course loads of classes that are critical to counselor development. The addition of new required classes, even important ones, such as those dealing with gender issues, may be impossible given the available resources to counselor education programs.

Various authors have recommended the infusion of gender issues into counselor preparation curricula; however, this only partially addresses the need for training in this area. Equally important is the institutional climate, which must reflect a commitment to the development of such knowledge, awareness, and skills, both within courses and throughout other aspects of the program. This type of environment is possible only if educators are willing to examine their own values, attitudes, and behaviors with regard to women and men (Gilbert, 1992; Worell & Remer, 1992).

Modifying the CACREP standards to assure more systematic attention to gender issues in all aspects of the training program may be an effective strategy for accomplishing the goal of enhanced gender awareness and training among faculty and administrators as well as counselor trainees. However, the successful transfer of guidelines into practice is not an easy

task in any area, especially one such as gender, which is not universally viewed as central to the curriculum. Moreover, the CACREP Standards are only a beginning, and are applicable only to those programs which are CACREP-accredited or interested in seeking CACREP accreditation. Furthermore, implications for additional research emerge, including an investigation of the factors that contribute to effective gender-sensitive counselor education, as well as an exploration of differing perceptions of such factors. Such concerns will need to be addressed by educators and researchers if counselor education programs are to prepare their students responsibly for counseling women and men.

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